

Washington Transportation Plan – Progress Report

February 24, 2005

This issue of the *WTP Progress Report* summarizes the first of several workshops being held as the Washington State Transportation Commission and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) kicks off its second phase of work for the Washington Transportation Plan update. Read on to find out where we've been and where we're heading.

What's happened so far:

Last summer, the Transportation Commission held a series of workshops to examine data and information on nine key issue areas for transportation. Then in October 2004, the Commission hosted its "Milestone Event," a meeting with transportation interests, elected officials and industry representatives from across the state to share the information and hear others' perspectives. The meeting helped the Commission and the WSDOT identify emerging areas for targeted investment.

Where we're at:

The Commission has now moved on to the second phase of the WTP – further refining how we'll address our transportation system needs. The Transportation Commission is holding a series of workshops, which started this month and will continue in March, April, and May. The workshops will lead to prioritizing investment programs for the WTP and developing a 10-year investment plan. Both plans will be finalized by December 2005.

February 16 Workshop Summary

During February's workshop, the Commission reviewed guidelines that are in place through federal and state regulations and its own policy related to transportation priorities. The guidelines will provide direction as the Commission examines each of the nine issue areas and begins prioritizing possible investment programs. This review also helps to identify gaps in policy direction and strategies to carry out the state's role. For example:

- Public airports have been identified as important public facilities that are vital to a community's economic and future growth, and yet we lack national and/or state policy to protect these airports from encroachment by urban growth.
- State policy calls for preservation and restoration of short-line railroads, but it does not provide a strategy for prioritizing those rail preservation needs. This raised questions by the Commissioners about the state's role and pointed to the need for more study:
 - How does the state quantify the return on its investment? (An economic analysis is recommended.)
 - Is there value in the competitive circumstance of rail versus truck? Without a rail/truck option, what happens to competitive pricing?

- Should there be a commitment for support from those who claim to benefit from preservation of a line?

In other areas of Preservation, our direction is clearer, but the problems are large:

- On the topic of Highway Pavement preservation, concrete pavement is an area of growing concern. In the worst area in the state – downtown Seattle – repair promises to be expensive and inconvenient to fix. The state's strategy for preserving Hot Mix Asphalts and Chip Seals is to maintain highways at the "lowest life-cycle cost" – fixing the roads not too soon to give up useful life of the materials and not too late to where repair ends up costing more due to extensive damage. Cities and counties have similar issues, but they lack the funds to address maintenance and preservation needs. For all roadways, the backlog of needs will only drive the cost for repairs higher.
- The discussion of Highway Structures outlined the need for replacement and rehabilitation of aging, obsolete, and seismically vulnerable structures, including Alaskan Way Viaduct and the SR 520 Bridge. Programs to protect and extend the life of structures by painting and scour protection are also falling behind.
- Our ferry fleet includes vessels that are 75 years old. In some cases, it is no longer cost effective to try to upgrade and repair these aging boats. Aging and deteriorating ferry terminals are also a problem. In order to meet Legislative preservation standards, 351 terminal systems will require replacement or rehabilitation.

Other topics of discussion related to Preservation included:

- Park & Ride lot maintenance
- Airport pavements
- Public Transportation vehicle replacement
- Tribal Transportation Planning

What's ahead:

The Commission's March WTP workshop will continue with discussion on these issue areas:

- Safety – Washington's safety problem has, until recently, taken the lives of more than 600 people a year and costs \$5.6 billion annually. One of the first steps in tackling this problem is ensuring that decision-makers have good information and access to safety data. Other efforts may include programs targeted toward public education and a focus on pedestrian, bicycle, motorcycle, railroad crossings, two-lane roads and general aviation safety.
- Transportation Access – Basic transportation services are key issues for individuals without access to an automobile or the ability to drive. These individuals – the elderly, low income, persons with disabilities, and children – depend on services provided by volunteers, human service agencies, and public transportation providers. Coordination of services, funding, and defining policy for the state's role is needed.

The Transportation Commission will continue working through various program, policy, and revenue scenarios in the coming months. This summer, their focus will shift toward developing a prioritization process that will be used to determine what programs, policy and projects are carried forward to the WTP. In later summer or early fall, the Transportation Commission will adopt a draft Washington Transportation Plan and a draft 10-Year Investment Plan; both will be made available for public review and comment. The final plans will be adopted in December.

How can you participate?

- Attend your area's Regional Transportation Planning Organization's meetings
- Visit WTP on the Web: www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp
- Attend the Commission's WTP Workshops being held at the Transportation Building,

310 Maple Park Avenue SE, Olympia WA.:

- March: Safety, Transportation Access
- April: System Efficiencies, Bottlenecks & Chokepoints, Future Visions, Moving Freight
- May: Economy, Health & the Environment

Resources available on the Web:

If you haven't visited our website lately (<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/>) you may be surprised at what you'll find. Here's a sampling of what's available:

- **Data Library** – <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/datalibrary/> learn more about the conditions and uses of Washington's transportation system and facilities
- **Milestone Event** – <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/MilestoneEvent.htm> view the presentations and information briefs that were presented during the October 2004 meeting.
- **Key Issues** -- <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/ninekeyissues.htm> find out more about the nine key issue areas being explored in the WTP.
- **Recent Presentations** – <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/MostRecentPresentations.htm> review the information that we've been sharing about our findings with others around the state.

To learn more about the WTP, ask questions or provide comments, visit our website:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/>